



Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.

January 11, 2019

Dear Members of Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.

Happy New Year.

In the past, MGC has donated to the establishment of public gardens, such as Meijer Garden and Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids, the Historic Barnes Park in Traverse City, and Loda Lake Wildflower Sanctuary in White Cloud, to name, but a few. It is my pleasure to announce that MGC has donated to the establishment of the Oudolf Garden Detroit. It was designed by today's foremost public garden designer Piet Oudolf of The Netherlands who is also renowned as a leader of the "Dutch wave" style of plant-centric, naturalistic perennial gardening. He has designed three other US gardens: the High Line in New York City (one of today's most-visited gardens in the world) and Lurie Garden in the Millennium Park in Chicago (attracts 10 million visitors annually) and the most recently-planted garden in the new Delaware Botanic Gardens.

Oudolf's gardens have been called "euphoric and transcendent." He sees beauty not only in a flower, but also in leaf textures, plant forms, seed head movement, and in the gradual decay heading from autumn into winter—all of which provide year-round interest and touch people on an emotional level. With his knowledge of plants (a former nurseryman), he follows the practice of "right plant, right place" and having been inspired by North American prairies, incorporates native plants and grasses with other durable, non-invasive plant selections. His plantings are all about harmony, spontaneity, sustainability and durability year after year. Each of his gardens is unique and well-suited for the specific site.

Oudolf insists that funds not only be raised for the design and planting phases, but also for maintenance. Oudolf's public gardens have a paid head gardener or lead horticulturist who oversees the maintenance along with part-time help and volunteers. Believing in sustainability, an annual garden cut-down is done to enrich the soil and provide its own living mulch. This is accomplished with a large mulching mower in late winter just before the first signs of spring growth, allowing the garden to be open and exciting year-round. He visits all his public gardens regularly to check in and work with local staff to make needed adjustments, while allowing spontaneous seeding and change to occur naturally. His gardens attract not only people, but teem with birds, insects and pollinators—supporting MGC's project, Michigan Pollinator Garden.

The Garden Club of Michigan, one of MGC's member clubs, spearheaded the effort to encourage him to create his next garden in Detroit. After looking at potential locations, he chose approximately a two acre site in front of the Nancy Brown Peace Carillon on Belle Isle. In his own words, he announced, *"I am coming to Detroit to make a garden... This is the most natural location for one of my public gardens."*

Belle Isle, a 985-acre public park, is located in the Detroit River, one of the world's busiest international waterways, known as a significant migratory bird route and home to the one and

only international wildlife refuge in North America. This refuge surrounds the 2.5 mile-long Belle Isle Park. Belle Isle's original master plan was first envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1880s, designer of New York's Central Park. More than half the island is covered by three lakes, a lagoon, and 230 acres of forested wetlands. The island's unique, wet-mesic forest and penetrating canals provide a haven for migratory and resident birds and an important nursery habitat for fish. It is currently operated by Michigan's Department Natural Resources (DNR) and the Belle Isle Conservancy, established in 2011 is restoring, preserving and enhancing the historic structures and the natural environment of this public park. Both DNR and Detroit enthusiastically approved of having this garden and there are many supporters in and around Detroit. It attracts locals, residents of Southeast Michigan and visitors already and the number of visitors is expected to increase once this garden is completed.

The team behind the garden is currently collecting donations and will start planting in the autumn of 2019 if everything goes according to plan. For more information, photos, designs, and donating, please visit oudolfgardendetroit.org or you may refer to information on the MGC website under News. Planting will require many volunteers (not just MGC, but others across the state and possibly out-of-state). You could well imagine coordination that would be required. In that regard, MGC has named the MGC District I Director Ruth Moline to coordinate volunteers from MGC. If you are or your club is interested in volunteering, please let Ruth know (ruthmoline@aol.com or call 734-525-3167).

This is really an exciting time for MGC to once again be involved in helping to establish a fine garden that will be enjoyed for many years to come by not only people, but wildlife, too.

Thanks for all that you do in carpeting Michigan with pollinator gardens for the life-sustaining for and enjoyment by all.

Regards,
Carol Brodbeck
President Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.
Plant America; Grow and Share Michigan Pollinator Gardens